



HKTDCC  
Hong Kong International  
Film & TV Market (FILMART)  
香港國際影視展

THR.COM/FILMART

# THE **FILMART** *Hollywood* **REPORTER**

DAILY  
No. 2

MARCH  
19, 2013

Sean LAU  
劉青雲

Louis KOO  
古天樂

Sinje LEE  
李心潔

A Pang Brothers Film  
彭氏兄弟作品

## Inferno 3D 逃出生天

Universe Films Distribution Co., Ltd.

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f Universe Films

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寰宇



# TAIWAN CINEMA

HONGKONG  
2013

## HKIFF SELECTION 香港國際電影節入選影片

### - 台灣新氣象單元



明天記得愛上我  
Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?

陳駿霖  
Arvin CHEN

19:15 Mar 26 香港文化中心大劇院  
21:45 Mar 28 The Grand Cinema

甜·秘密  
Together

許肇任  
HSU Chao-Jen

17:20 Mar 23 The Grand Cinema  
19:15 Mar 28 The Grand Cinema

窮人·榴槤·麻藥·偷渡客  
Poor Folk

趙德胤  
Midi Z

19:30 Mar 26 UA 朗豪坊  
21:30 Mar 28 UA 朗豪坊

逆光飛翔  
Touch of the Light

張榮吉  
CHANG Jung-Chi

19:15 Mar 19 The Grand Cinema  
12:45 Mar 29 香港文化中心大劇院

阿嬤的夢中情人  
Forever Love

蕭力修  
Aozaru SHIAO  
北村豐晴  
Toyoharu Kitamura

17:00 Mar 29 The Grand Cinema  
12:00 Apr 01 香港文化中心大劇院

### - 國際短片競賽

禮物  
The Present

謝文明  
Joe HSIEH

21:30 Mar 24 香港科學館演講廳

### - 隆重首映

美好 2013  
Beautiful 2013

吳念真  
WU Nien-Jen

19:15 Mar 20 The Grand Cinema  
17:30 Mar 21 The Grand Cinema  
10:30 Mar 24 香港科學館演講廳  
15:00 Mar 29 香港科學館演講廳

## HAF SELECTION 香港亞洲電影投資會入選

哈特清潔公司  
Heart: The Cleaning Company (Feature Film)

Director 導演: HUANG Chao-Liang 黃朝亮  
Producer 監製: Wolf CHEN 陳鴻元  
Production Company 製作公司: Double Edge Entertainment

## HAF/FOX FINALIST SELECTION 華語電影開創大獎入選

十兄弟  
Ten Brothers (Animation)

Director 導演: HUA Wen-Qing 華文慶  
Producer 監製: Jimmy YANG 楊駿閔  
Production Companies 製作公司:  
Serenity Entertainment International 山水國際娛樂、  
The Together Studio 共玩創意

## ASIAN FILM AWARDS NOMINEES 亞洲電影大獎入圍

最佳男主角	張孝全《女朋友·男朋友》
最佳女主角	桂綸鎂《女朋友·男朋友》
最佳新演員	簡嫚書《南方小羊牧場》、黃裕翔《逆光飛翔》
最佳男配角	鳳小岳《女朋友·男朋友》
最佳女配角	李烈《甜·秘密》
最佳視覺效果	鄒志盛, 陳志豪, 潘志桓, 林哲民, 蘇文聖《南方小羊牧場》

FILMMART  
(BOOTH)  
1B-C01



# THE *Hollywood* REPORTER

MARCH 19, 2013

**BREAKING NEWS**

**A Good Day to Die Hard** tops Chinese box office

Japan plans overseas digital content strategy

Q&A: Asian Film Awards Best Picture winner Lou Ye

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**FILMART**  
No. 2

## U Film To Remake To's *Heart*

By Karen Chu

**E**NGLISH LANGUAGE remake rights to Media Asia's 2011 urban romantic comedy *Don't Go Breaking My Heart* have been optioned by Belgium's u Film, which is now developing the script. Directed by Johnnie To and written by Wai Ka-fai, who were at Filmart to promote their new collaboration *Blind Detective*, the original film was a hit in Hong Kong and China, where it grossed nearly 100 million yuan (\$16 million).

Media Asia is no stranger to foreign remakes of its films. The studio's *Infernal Affairs* was famously remade by Martin Scorsese into his Oscar-winning *The Departed*; but that aside, the company's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

## Huace Takes Voice to Big Screen

By Clarence Tsui

**H**UACE FILM & TV will adapt the Chinese version of *The Voice* into an omnibus film comprising romance-driven segments featuring participants and judges from the show.

"They will be about how ordinary people in China make their way to the glamorous world of the stage — stories about what the younger generation's dreams of today and how they achieve them," said Zhao Yifang, director and general manager of the Hangzhou-based media company.

Zhao said she had already secured adaptation rights to the *The Voice of China*, which is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

## Filmart Boosted By Asia Boom

With a record number of exhibitors in attendance and regional film sectors thriving, dealmakers express optimism on busy first day of the Hong Kong market By Gavin J. Blair

**T**HE 17TH EDITION OF Filmart opened Monday with most exhibitors and the HAF financing forum participants looking at full meeting schedules, and foot traffic on the market floor looking slightly up on last year. However, with some buyers leaving the market early, there may be a concentration of business on the first two days of the event.

Indian major Eros International, which has returned to Filmart after a two-year hiatus due to demand from business partners, reported a busy start to the market.

"A lot of our clients were emailing us saying we should meet up at Filmart, so we decided to come again this year. Asia is booming now, it's where the action's at," said Kumar Ahuja, head of

business development at Eros. "We've had loads of meetings; it's been a fantastic start. Bollywood is getting a lot of attention in Japan, Korea and Taiwan now. And our film *English Vinglish* just opened in Hong Kong on Friday on 7 screens, with 29 shows a day. Usually Bollywood films get about 2 shows a day."

The big KOFIC (Korean Film

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Anthony Wong stars as the legendary Wing Chun master, here arriving in Hong Kong in the early 50s.

## Ip Man - The Final Fight

This nostalgia-tinged biopic chronicles the lesser known Hong Kong years of the gentleman kung fu master By Deborah Young

**T**HERE SEEMS TO BE NO END IN SIGHT FOR the lucrative glut of *Ip Man* films, which to date counts at least five biopics of the legendary kung fu master who trained Bruce Lee in the art of Wing Chun. The fame of the real-life Ip Man, who died in 1972, spread far beyond Chinese borders with January's release of Wong Kar-wai's romantic hit *The Grandmaster*, a reflective auteur actioner which

set the bar extremely high as far as international audiences are concerned. Opening this year's Hong Kong Film Festival, Herman Yau's *Ip Man - The Final Fight* is an enjoyable if far less sophisticated tale that nostalgically taps into Hong Kong cinema of yesteryear, while still delivering considerable excitement in the fight scenes. Offshore it may hitch a ride with dyed-in-the-wool martial arts fans on the coattails of *The Grandmaster*, but more likely will get lost in the shadow.

For the record, Wilson Yip directed the acclaimed 2008 *Ip Man* starring Donnie Yen, which focused on the master's early life in Foshan; it was soon followed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

# Pang Brothers Fired Up By *Inferno*

Co-director Oxide says the quest for authenticity in the upcoming disaster epic meant going to some extremes on set

By Karen Chu

THE PANG BROTHERS ARE using 3D effects to take moviegoers inside a place no one wants to go in real life — a raging fire. In their upcoming \$20 million disaster film *Inferno 3D* for Universe Films, the twins, known for their scare tactics in horror films such as *The Eye* and *Sleepwalker 3D*, are using the stereoscopic technology to plunge the audience into a fire that engulfs a high-rise building in southern China.

“With the exception of fire fighters, ordinary people are unlikely to experience the scene of a fire in their lifetimes, or live to tell the tale,” said Oxide Pang, who is co-directing with his twin brother Danny. “So we tried to create an immersive environment to let the audience experience what a real fire looks like.”

The directors also largely eschewed special effects for the blazing scenes. “In almost all of the scenes, we used real fire. My

Louis Koo plays a businessman caught in a raging fire within a South China high-rise.



rationale is this: if the audience can tell that the flames were made by CGI, they wouldn't be frightened by the intensity of the fire,” Pang said.

Pang added that the element of realism will be pivotal in a film that plays on such a primal fear, and he went to great lengths to ensure authenticity — even if it meant frightening his actors.

“If I, as the director, weren't nervous and scared in that environment, how can I ask the audience to empathize and feel scared?” he

asked. “That's why in some scenes, the blaze was almost uncontrollable and the expressions on the actors' faces were of genuine fear.”

But all that realism took its toll on the director. The difficulty of the setup — synchronized between 3D cinematography, fire, smoke and acting — was overwhelming. Fire, it seems, can be more temperamental than actors. “It was too much sometimes and I found that I've never been more stressed in my life,” he recalled. “Sometimes the fire was burning

perfectly, but the actors might have messed up their lines; other times the actors hit their marks but the flames were dying out. The pressure was too much. I've never wanted to run away from a shoot, but for this one I did.”

But he didn't, nor did his brother Danny. The film, now in post-production and slated for a late 2013 release, also received support from the Guangzhou fire department, which dispatched over 200 fire fighters on duty to shoot the evacuation scene on the ground. **TJH**

## China's Mystery Leads Asian Film Awards

Lou Ye's edgy drama takes top award despite censorship controversy By Gavin J. Blair

LOU YE'S CONTROVERSIAL *MYSTERY* WON best film, best screenwriter and best newcomer for Qi Xi at the 7th Asian Film Awards on Monday.

A tale of sexual and social malaise set in China's growing middle class, *Mystery* competed in *Un Certain Regard* in Cannes last year, but came under the censor's scrutiny when it came to be released at home. Following cuts made to a violent scene, Lou had his name removed from the film for the Chinese release.

“It's been quite a struggle given it's just over a few seconds of the film. But still I thought it's worth it — because it's through this exchange with the authorities that I realized these days you can engage in a conversation with them. They are willing to discuss things with you,” Lou told *The Hollywood Reporter* Monday before his win was announced. “The film was released in cinemas at the end of the day — so for me, personally, it's a change, and a sign of changes in the way the censorship system works..”

Lou had just flown in from the Hangzhou Asian Film Festival, where he had won a director of the year award for *Mystery*.

It was a good night for Japan too, with wins for

Kitano Takeshi in the best director category for his violent gangster sequel *Outrage Beyond*, best supporting actress for Watanabe Makiko as the mother in family drama *Capturing Dad*, and best editing for *The Kirishima Thing*.

The quirky high school drama *The Kirishima Thing* won the same award at this month's Japan Academy Awards, where it also took best picture and best director for Yoshida Daihachi.

Philippines took both the best actor and actress awards: for Eddie Garcia in *Bwakaw* and Nora Aunor in *Thy Womb*.

India also scored two wins, Nawazuddin Siddiqui for best supporting actor in *Talaash: The Answer Lies Within* and Pritam Chakraborty with best composer for *Barfi!*

Iraqi Kurdistan-Turkish film *Rhino Season* scored a pair of awards: Touraj Aslani for cinematography and Bahman Ghobadi for production design.

Local boy Man Lim-chung's best costume designer win for China-Hong Kong co-production *The Silent War* ensured the host city didn't go unrepresented at the glitzy ceremony in the Convention and Exhibition Centre.

— CLARENCE TSUI ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT

## Horror Omnibus Names Helmers

By Karen Chu

EDKO FILMS AND MOVIE Addict Productions have announced the full director lineup of the two-part omnibus ghost story *Tales from the Dark*. Produced by *Cold War*'s Bill Kong and Matthew Tang, the film will showcase the directing talents of six filmmakers: Fruit Chan (*Made in Hong Kong*), Lee Chi Ngai (*Dance Subaru*), Lawrence Lau (*Besieged City*), Teddy Robin (*The Legend of Wisely*), Gordon Chan (*Painted Skin*) and actor Simon Yam (*Echoes of the Rainbow*) in his directorial debut.

Each short is adapted from stories by Hong Kong bestselling author Lilian Lee, whose novels *Farewell to My Concubine* and *Rouge* were adapted for the screen in the 1980s. **TJH**



# LOTTE ENTERTAINMENT

## FILMART / 1B-E19



### An Ethics Lesson

Genre : Thriller, Mystery / Director : PARK Myung-rang / Cast : LEE Je-hoon, MOON So-ri  
Korean Release Date : February 21, 2013



### Very Ordinary Couple (V.O.C)

Genre : Romance, Drama / Director : ROH Deok / Cast : LEE Min-ki, KIM Min-hee  
Korean Release Date : March 21, 2013

### South Bound

Genre : Comedy, Drama  
Director : YIM Soon-rye  
Cast : KIM Yun-seok, OH Yun-soo  
Korean Release Date : February 7, 2013

#### Screening Info.

March 20 (Wed) 10:00 a.m.  
HKCEC Meeting Room, N204-205



FILMART  
contact

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## RAMBLING REPORTER

## Friendly Ghosts

Shivers went down spines at the ghost story omnibus *Tales from the Dark* press conference. Two eerily lit models dressed as Chinese paper dolls — used traditionally as a tribute to the dead as servants — added to the general atmosphere of spookiness. Singer-actress **Kelly Chen**, who plays a ghost hunter in the film, demonstrated the most dedication and showed up in full costume, including a large red crystal that she clutched during the entire event. Adding to the unusually supernatural atmosphere: strange “amulets” were handed out to press members. “This is the best press conference of the day,” one journalist was overheard mumbling.

## Thai Bind

Over coffee in the Grand Hyatt’s Tiffin Lounge, Thai auteur and former Cannes Palme d’Or winner **Weerasethakul Apichatpong** confided he’s a little concerned about the title of his next film — *Cemetery of Kings* — which will be his first feature in four years and is now seeking financing at HAF. “Yes, it’s quite sensitive — I may have to change it,” he says. In Apichatpong’s native Thailand, home of the world’s longest sitting monarch, any perceived disparagement of King Bhumibol Adulyadej is punishable by imprisonment under the country’s strict lese majeste laws. Apichatpong says his new project will indeed touch upon Thailand’s wildly complex political predicament, but from the safe distance of the director’s characteristically oblique and dreamy style.

## Wives Tales

In addition to her appearance at the Asia Film Award’s last night to pick up her special Excellence in Cinema honor, **Michelle Yeoh** will be attending an Asia Business Council (ABC) meeting this week, *The Hollywood Reporter* learned from an ABC insider at a cocktail party Saturday. Yeoh’s involvement in the Hong Kong-based elite business organization stems in part from her rather improbable friendship with ABC vice-chairman, **Marjorie Yang** — the two influential Hong Kong women are said to have bonded over a shared plot point in their personal histories: both were once married to local tycoon **Dickson Poon**. **THR**

## The 2013 Filmart Poster Awards

**THR** pays tribute to the most amusing and over-the-top promotional materials from the second day of the market

By Mike Rubiner



**BEST FOLLOW-UP ROLE**  
*A Horse on the Balcony*

The star of *War Horse* told his agent to get off his duff and get him a new job — and this time no running through barbed wire or getting his patoot shot off. The result is this sweet gig, where he gets all the tuna casserole he can eat and the only downside is two little tykes who fancy themselves jockeys. Now if his new family would just get a maid.



**BEST ARGUMENT FOR ELOPING**  
*Dark Wedding*

Yes, it is true love that two insist on getting married when one is alive and the other dead. But who pays for the wedding, and how do you figure out the head count? Do you use a minister or an exorcist? What about the gift registry — do the dead go for crystal? And who’s in charge of the thank-you notes? We’re all for true love, but has anyone really thought this through?



**BEST MERCHANDISING POTENTIAL**  
*Robokicks*

Cool sneakers, fighting robots, soccer, video games — the team behind this movie made sure they didn’t miss a single kids-movie trope. If only there were an exploding ball of fire and a girl with a princess tiara. Oh, wait, they’re there too! The only misstep seems to be that kid with the Hitlerian hairdo.



**BEST OLIVER STONE WANNABE**  
*The Bunker*

This one raises a few questions. Does Vietnam have a dirty little secret? Which is a greater honor — to be a UFC champion or a UFC legend? When did the military adopt the sleeveless look? Where can we get a great steak knife like that? And mainly, where is this bunker and how do we stay as far away from it as possible?

## HKIFF Mulls Move to New Venue

By Clarence Tsui

**T**HE HONG KONG International Film Festival Society is exploring the possibility of relocating its three flagship events to a new entertainment complex to be built in Kowloon Bay.

According to Matthew Poon, manager of the society-backed Hong Kong-Asia Film Financing Forum (HAF), discussion is taking place to stage festival screenings, the project market and the Asian Film Awards at the E-max Cineplex, a new venue to be unveiled at the Kowloon Bay International Trade and Exhibition Center (Kitec).

Developed by the center’s owners — property developers Hopewell Holdings — the complex will feature a nine-screen cinema with a total of more than 1,300 seats. The 2,000-seat Star Hall, Poon said, could be a possible venue for the annual awards, which usually takes place on the first or second day of the festival.

“This is a mutually beneficial situation,” Poon told *The Hollywood Reporter*, referring to how Hopewell’s plans of hosting less mainstream films in the new cineplex could allow the HAF to benefit from this arrangement as completed projects emerging from the event could be shown there.

The AFA has been held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on Hong Kong Island since its inception, while HAF activities have also been held there as part of Filmart for years. Festival screenings, meanwhile, have mostly been held at government-run or commercial theaters downtown.

While now placed far away from downtown in the former industrial belt on the eastern side of the Kowloon peninsula, Kitec will find itself situated within what the Hong Kong government has demarcated to be a new central business district. The revamp is slated to be finished by early 2014. **THR**



## Filmart Boosted

CONTINUED FROM 1

Council) pavilion had a record 16 companies under its roof, with a rise in VFX and CG exhibitors, due to a growth in demand for their services in East Asia, according to organizers.

"We're also offering an increase in the cash rebates for filming in Korea from 25 to 30 percent of production costs — that's attracted a lot of interest from Chinese companies," said Chris Kim, head of KOFIC's festival and market team.

The 22-company Japan pavilion was also busy, with organizers reporting a lot meetings booked for the first two days of the market.

The meetings' board for 25 projects in HAF (Hong Kong – Asia Film Financing Forum) was awash with red dots denoting 30-minute confabs lined up through the whole day.

The hectic meeting schedules for the first couple of days of the market may be partly due to some buyers spending less time at the event.

"The organizers of Filmart only pay for three nights of hotel for many of the buyers, so they have to leave on Wednesday," said an overwhelmed sales agent. "As a result, all our meetings are scheduled on Monday and Tuesday. Our schedule is so packed we hardly have a break."



"On the bright side, though, it gives the market a sense of energy and vibrancy," she added.

While most deals are traditionally signed on the final day of markets, this year may see an increase in finalizing on day two.

— KAREN CHU ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT

## Star, Emperor Team For 'Go Local!'

By Karen Chu

**S**TAR CHINESE MOVIES (SCM) and Emperor Motion Pictures (EMP) announced the original production initiative "Go Local!" to support and nurture Hong Kong filmmakers and acting talent, and to produce films that have local relevance. The companies are working with local actor-producer Chapman To to produce five films, equally sharing financial support for the projects.

EMP will handle the global distribution rights of the five films To produced, while SCM is in charge of the worldwide TV and new media rights. SCM, the leading Chinese language pay-TV channel in Asia, has a long standing relationship with EMP through an output deal that has continued for almost ten years. Through this initiative, the two companies are planning to produce not less than ten films in China, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

"I see we have an opportunity of reinvigorating a resurgence of Hong Kong cinema now," Ward L. Platt, President of Fox International Channels — Asia Pacific and Middle East, told *The Hollywood Reporter*. "It used to be Hong Kong cinema was popular everywhere in the Chinese market, but it's shrunk a little to where the local content is stronger. We see overall interest in China film production is going to grow, but it's going to grow on a local level first, then some of the best projects will cross over to other Chinese markets and other Asian markets."

"One of the big opportunities we have with SCM is we have a Chinese channel running in America, Australia and Europe, so we can bring these films to Chinese communities very easily," added Platt. "But we also have a Hollywood movie channel in the market, so we can do a tribute to Chinese cinema and showcase these films to a much broader audience, and not just a Chinese audience." **THR**

## U Film

CONTINUED FROM 1

2004 Nick Cheung starrer *Breaking News*, also directed by To, has been remade in Russia by Swedish director Anders Banke.

Moreover, the film's Hindu

remake rights have recently been optioned by an undisclosed Indian company.

"We tend to actively discuss with interested parties about selling the remake rights for projects in our catalog that we think are remake-able, or that have subject matter

with international crossover potential," said Ricky Tse, General Manager of sales and acquisition, Media Asia. "Apart from the financial benefits of selling the remake rights, it helps to build up our brand name and increase our international profile." **THR**

## Huace Adapts Voice

CONTINUED FROM 1

itself an adaptation, by local shingle Caixing Productions, of the Dutch show *The Voice of Holland*. The company is now working on the script, and aims to roll out the finished film by 2013.

A "top-tier director" in the mainland film industry has already been lined up for the project, said Donny Liang, general manager of Huace's film-making arm, Zhejiang Golden Globe Pictures.

Meanwhile, Huace is also working on a sequel to last year's espionage thriller *The Silent War*, with the company in talks to reteam with the first film's Hong Kong directorial duo Felix Chong Man-keung and Alan Mak Siu-fai.

Huace is also a partner in John Woo's latest 1940s-set project. Zhao said the premise, revolving around Taiwan and Shanghai during the war-torn decade, was first initiated by her company but it is now more driven by her co-producers, China Film Group, Beijing Galloping Horse and Lion Rock Productions, the company co-owned by Woo and Terence Chang.

Founded in October 2005 and listed on the Shenzhen exchange in 2010, Huace began with its emphasis on making television serials. In fact, the company will announce a collaboration during Filmart with Hong Kong's Now TV, over the production of a series about Chinese queens, beginning with the Han Dynasty-set *The First Empress*.

Zhao said two other series are also in the pipeline:

one about monarchs, which will be released in Chinese and English versions, and another about martial arts, to which well-known Hong Kong art designer Yee Chung-man is attached.

Apart from branching into film production, Huace will also run programs developing young talent and with an international perspective, she added.

Huace is already in the final stage of negotiations over a deal with South Korean media conglomerate CJ Entertainment, which would entail the two companies co-producing a set number of films every year.

Zhao said the company is also setting up a fund to nurture future directors and producers in the Chinese industry, with plans to send "not fewer than 20" people to a program at University of California, Los Angeles within this year. **THR**



Zhao Yifang





## Arvin Chen

**The rising filmmaker who moved east from the U.S. a decade ago talks about social mores, casting pop stars and the future of New Taiwan Cinema** *By Clarence Tsui*

**H**AVING ALREADY HAD one short and his first two feature-length films screened at the Berlin International Film Festival, Arvin Chen easily could be taken as an example of a Taiwanese filmmaker traveling uncommonly well abroad. But the 35-year-old would be first to admit that he doesn't exactly fit the bill, as he hails from a very international upbringing: born in Boston and raised around the San Francisco Bay Area, Chen only returned to his parents' homeland a decade ago to work for the revered auteur Edward Yang, whose *A One and a Two* inspired him to become a filmmaker. His feature directorial debut, *Au Revoir Taipei*, received the backing of Wim Wenders and was selected for the Berlinale in 2010; his second film, *Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?* screened in the festival's Panorama section in February. His latest centers on Weichung, a nondescript middle-aged ophthalmologist (Richie Jen) who decides to reveal his long-suppressed homosexuality — a move that shocks his homemaker wife Feng (Mavis Fan). As Chen prepares for the Asian premiere

of his *Will You Still Love Me* at the Hong Kong International Film Festival, he talked with *The Hollywood Reporter* about the project's origins at Filmart, the raison d'être of this midlife crisis story and his views on Taiwanese cinema in bloom.

**Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow was in Hong Kong this time last year as an HAF project. How much did that experience help in driving the production forward, and how has it evolved in the past 12 months?** HAF was helpful in that it coincided with the start of our preproduction and was the first time that producer Lee Lieh and I started pitching the project creatively and really officially began our collaboration on this film. It was also the first time we began meeting with sales agents and distributors regarding the film. Ultimately, our sales agent, Media Asia, and Hong Kong distributor, Golden Scene, came out of some of those meetings.

**Was it a challenge to get Richie Jen and Mavis Fan to take these roles since they are so different from what they usually do onscreen?**

My producer Lee Lieh was the one who suggested Richie, whom she said she saw in the role as soon as she read the script. I had never met him before, but I was convinced as soon as I met him in person. The challenge of casting his character was to find someone who was slightly older — someone in his 40s — but still possessed a certain sweetness and innocence, which Richie definitely has. It was an exciting challenge for us since his usual on-screen persona is associated more with genre films, playing cops or gangsters, and we wanted to shape him into a middle-aged husband and father. Richie was really great about taking on the role and never hesitated about playing a gay character. In fact, he told us he has lots of gay friends and wanted to do something for them by taking on the role. Mavis' character was by far the hardest to cast. Originally we had considered Mavis for the character of Mandy [Jen's character's feisty younger sister, now played by Kimi Hsia], but when I met Mavis in person, I thought it could be very interesting to have her try Feng, especially since we had never found anyone we really felt was suitable for the role. We decided to take a chance with Mavis, and we all worked hard to help her find Feng through lots of character work, scene improvisations and costuming. Mavis is on the surface so different than her character, but in the end, I think she was able to find some things emotionally that she could really connect to. We also thought there was something fun and challenging about casting these two famous pop stars to play an everyday husband and wife.

**As someone returning to Taiwan from abroad, how do you reconcile your stories with the ethos and values of Taiwanese society, given that your characters are reacting against social norms?**

I think I'll always be of a bit of an outsider, but I'm starting to think

of that as a good thing in a lot of ways. Most of the stories that I've done in Taiwan come from my observations about life and people here, and I think a lot of that perspective comes from being on the outside looking in. The idea for this film literally came from hearing an anecdote about Taiwanese society, about gay men going back into the closet, which struck me as both intriguing and different, coming from the perspective of a Westerner.

**How has Taiwanese cinema changed in the past three years? Do you see more opportunities for a younger generation of Taiwanese directors and more variety in films being made?**

It's gotten much bigger, and there are so many more productions and a huge increase in the variety and scale of the different kinds of films being made, all of which is great. There are growing pains too, which is normal, meaning sometimes there are films that don't work as well or certain genres that we just aren't ready for. But all of it is helping to develop the film industry. I think there are also definitely some producers who are only making films to turn a quick profit or take advantage of a perceived trend, but that's true of any film market in the world. As a young director, there are lots of opportunities, and that really is a great thing.

**Do you still sense a need among your peers to get out of the shadow of the New Taiwan Cinema directors, like Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien? Is it easier to make films that can straddle the art house and commercial worlds?**

I think that's less of a concern now, especially with a more commercial film market developing. There's less stigma of Taiwanese films only being art house. Personally, one of the reasons I moved to Asia to make movies in the first place was because of Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien, so I don't feel the need as much to get out of that shadow, since those are the films that I love. On the other hand, I find myself worrying less and less about what is commercial or art house, since so far it seems like the films I make always get stuck in the middle anyway — probably a product of me growing up loving both art house films and Hollywood blockbusters. **THR**

### Vital Stats

Nationality Taiwanese-American  
Born November 26, 1978

Film in Hong Kong  
*Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow*  
(Gala Premiere)

Selected Filmography  
*Au Revoir Taipei*, 2010; *Mei* (short), 2006;  
Notable Awards

Berlin Silver Bear, *Mei*, 2007; Berlin Film Festival Netpac Award, *Au Revoir Taipei*, 2010; Deauville Asian Asian Film Festival Jury Prize, *Au Revoir Taipei*, 2010



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Lee says that when she retires she may dedicate herself to singing opera — if she can conquer stage fright.

## HEAD OF SALES AND ACQUISITION, EDKO FILMS

# Audrey Lee

The veteran buyer reflects on her nearly three decades in the business, why film sales in China are overpriced and how she benefitted from online piracy *By Karen Chu*

**F**OR NEARLY 30 YEARS, EDKO FILM'S Audrey Lee has played a central role in determining what Hong Kong cinema audiences get to watch. An integral part of Edko Films — her first job there in 1984 was finding movie stars to dub Cantonese voices for Japanese animated features the company released — Lee is one of the leading importers of foreign and specialty films in Hong Kong as head of sales and acquisition. She spoke with *The Hollywood Reporter* about her proudest acquisitions, rising asking prices and her passion for Chinese opera.

### How did you begin your career in acquisition?

When I first started, we'd only determine a sale by watching the finished product. So it helped to have more people onboard to see all the films available at a market. I was asked to go to the American Film Market to help with watching films. I was very pleased with the job; I got to travel and watch movies and get paid for it. My friends were envious; to them, what I do for a living is what they do for leisure. The only drawback for me was my fear of flying. And the only prerequisite for this job is a love of movies, which suits me just fine. My love affair with film started when I was a child of seven. I was living with my auntie in Macau, and she used to take me to see a film every night. It lasted for about three to four years, until I got into secondary school. So I saw all the Chinese and foreign films shown at that time, every single one of them. The only thing was, my auntie loved horror films, and as a child, I was terrified. I had nightmares every night. To this day, I don't like horror films.

### How was the market different when you started?

The market share of foreign films was very different. It was the heyday of Hong Kong films, so local films took up 70 percent of the market. Another major difference was that distributors and theater chains had exclusive deals to show films. So some chains only showed Hong Kong films from a certain distributor, and others only showed foreign films. The theater business of Edko was to exhibit foreign films, so we had to buy films to fill up our screens. Viewing habits were also different at that time. There was no home video, no piracy; a film could run in one cinema for a year. So cinema was the only platform for the audience to watch a first-run film. And that's when we began to sell to TV stations.

### Which acquisitions are you most proud of?

There were a number of films that I loved and I was very happy that I got the rights. One was the Iranian film *Children of Heaven*, which did very well with the help of Commercial Radio Hong Kong, and another was *Wallace and Gromit*. ... But the film that I'm proudest of in my career, the one with the biggest return, was [the Bollywood comedy] *3 Idiots*. It was a case of "mighty oaks from little acorns grow." I learned about it online and immediately contacted the film's studio, Reliance. It was late November [2009], and the film was premiering on Dec. 9. They arranged for me to see the film, and I closed the deal in Berlin. I bought the rights to Hong Kong and China. I explained to Reliance, "Minimum guarantee is just a starting point; you're going to make a lot of money." It was the first Indian film to be widely distributed in Hong

Kong. I knew it'd be profitable, but I didn't expect it to do so well. In a way, piracy helped the film's box-office performance. Because we couldn't get the approval for release in China for a long time, we had to delay the release date in Hong Kong as well. It took us two years from the time I bought the rights to its theatrical release. A lot of people had seen or heard about the film online, and there was a lot of buzz. We always believe piracy is bad for theatrical business, but in this case, piracy was not completely detrimental because the film is almost three hours long, and people lose patience when they watch online.

### Is China a part of your consideration when you acquire a film nowadays?

Yes, it is. We have experience in distributing films in China. We distributed the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and the *Rush Hour* films for New Line in China. [The Broadway chain under Edko] has over 200 screens in China. Our most successful film in China was the underwater adventure *Sanctum*, with James Cameron as executive producer. It grossed over 120 million yuan [\$19.3 million]. The second best was *Slumdog Millionaire*, which grossed over 50 million yuan. In the past, I would keep an eye on action-oriented films for the Chinese market, but these days, the competition is too intense. Compared with the Chinese mainland distributors, the Hong Kong distributors are much less aggressive. The asking prices are astronomical nowadays. When the market is unknown, we tend to underprice a film. But when a film such as *The Expendables*, whose flat sale price was in six figures, ends up grossing over 300 million yuan [\$48.2 million] in China, companies tend to expect too much at the box office. In my opinion, sales for China are overpriced. Companies ask for a few hundred thousand American dollars for a drama and a few million for action films. For a market as unpredictable as China — where there are so many variables — I don't think I want to take that risk.

### I know you're a passionate fan and performer of Chinese opera. Is that something you want to pursue further when you retire?

I have a lot of interests. I believe a person shouldn't do only one thing for life. When I retire, I will dedicate most of my time into practicing and performing Chinese opera. When I was a child, I used to watch a lot of Chinese opera. I started officially taking Chinese opera classes in 2009, and I've performed a few times. The only problem is, I have stage fright. So the biggest challenge for me now is to overcome my stage fright. But whether I perform or not, I practice every day. As they say, practice makes perfect. My dream is to hold a concert for my friends. I've talked to a few friends in the industry about this, and I thought I'd schedule the concert during Filmart one year, so that all my industry friends from around the world will be in Hong Kong and can come see me perform. [Laughs.] **THR**



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*Painted Skin: Resurrection* broke China's all time box office record in August when it took in \$113 million domestically; *Iron Man 3*, inset, is the latest high-profile co-production between China and Hollywood.

# Where Does China Go From Here?

**After a year of unprecedented growth — including three domestic blockbusters, more co-prods with Hollywood and increased investment in infrastructure — the future of the world's second biggest film market still remains uncertain** *By Clarence Tsui*

**D**ISASTER STRIKES, the world caves in, and China comes in to save the day: when Roland Emmerich proposed such a scenario three years ago in his apocalyptic blockbuster *2012*, critics either derided him as cynical (he was trying to cash in on the consumptive power of the Chinese market) or starry-eyed (the premise would only happen much further down the line, an idea summed up by how a U.S. diplomat said in the film: "I didn't think it was possible — not in our time").

But the same set of snickering detractors are probably eating their words now. Somehow mirroring the title of Emmerich's film, 2012 proved to be the year in which China made some serious

noise on the global film scene, leading to plenty of speculation that the country's massive market was poised to take a giant leap forward in its maturation process. But now that the dust has settled, the question facing China's film industry is: What now?

This certainly wasn't the case a year ago. It all started with Chinese leader-in-waiting Xi Jinping's announcement in Los Angeles last February that the country's notorious quota system would be allowing more imported films into its film market. Then came the manic spending spree which saw AMC cinemas and Digital Domain falling into Chinese hands. This was followed by the surprise announcement that television manufacturer TCL was paying \$5 million for branding

rights to Grauman's Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard.

All these moves have awakened many to the relentless — and rapid — growth of the Chinese film industry. According to figures released in January by the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, total ticket sales in 2012 amounted to \$2.69 billion — a whopping 19-fold increase from the earnings a decade ago (\$144.2 million). The astronomical leap stems in part from the drastic increase of screens in the country, from just 1,500 in 2002 to over 13,000 at the end of 2012, with about 10 new screens added to the total every day.

This turbo-charged rush is put into sharp focus by *Titanic 3D*'s Chinese box office of \$152.4 million, which is triple the film's

gross stateside (director James Cameron has become a major figure in China, launching his own company, CPG China, to develop 3D productions in the country), and then *Life of Pi*'s earnings of \$91.8 million, an amount only surpassed in the U.S. as award-season buzz led to a surge in attendance figures. Meanwhile, the limelight has also fallen on how mainland Chinese audiences are warming to domestic productions as well. Despite seeing, for the first time in history, imported blockbusters taking more at the country's cinemas than local films in a single calendar year, the big homespun hits have become, well, bigger: the box-office record for Chinese-language films has been broken twice in the past eight months, first by *Painted Skin: Resurrection* (\$113.2 million) in August, and then by *Lost in Thailand* (\$202.6 million) in January. *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons*, which has already taken \$195.2 million by last week, is poised to shatter the record yet again as the film cruises through the last leg of its run in the next three weeks.

This boom has certainly been music to the ears of international producers, who are quick to dive in and clamour for either Sino-U.S. collaborations (such as News Corp.'s investment into Bona Film, or 20th Century Fox's alliance with China Film Group) or co-production deals with Chinese partners (which would allow movies to circumvent the 34-film quota aiming to cap imports into the country, and also a larger slice of box-office revenue for the incoming studios).

But despite all this activity problems have abounded as both the authorities and filmmakers struggle to define the game on their own terms, as seen by top film regulator Zhang Pimin's public censure of foreign projects



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CHINA'S BIG YEAR:  
BY THE NUMBERS**36 MILLION**

The number of *Lost in Thailand* tickets sold during its record-breaking run from December 12, 2012 to February 17, 2013

**42:1**

Box office-to-budget ratio for *Lost in Thailand*, which earned \$193 million against a budget of just \$4.8 million

**3**

The number of times the box-office record for domestic releases was broken in the last 12 months, first by *Painted Skin: Resurrection*, then by *Lost in Thailand* and finally by *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons*

**48.46%**

The proportion of the total box office takings in 2012 generated by domestic releases — the first time in history home-grown productions took less than imported movies by year-end

**\$5 MILLION**

The price Chinese television manufacturer TCL paid in January for ten-year naming rights of Grauman's Chinese Theater on Hollywood Boulevard

**\$91.8 MILLION**

Chinese box office of Ang Lee's *Life of Pi* during its four-week run in November-December 2012 — a higher total than its U.S. box office until an award-season revival arrived in January

**10.5**

The number of screens opening in mainland China every day **VH1**



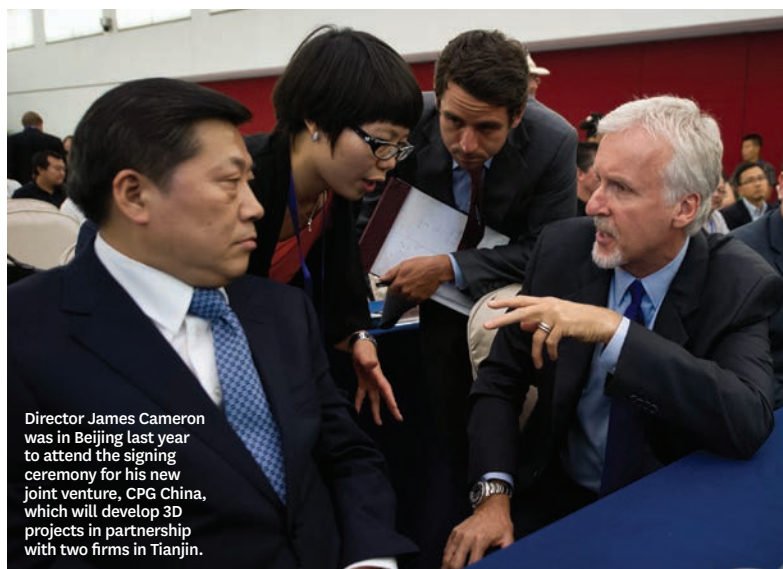
Despite blockbuster box office in China, *Lost in Thailand* failed to connect with U.S. audiences when it was released stateside in February.

exploiting Chinese rules with “fake” co-productions, and *Iron Man 3*'s much-documented and protracted quest for co-production status.

Such debates all stem from a collective anxiety — shared by bureaucrats and film moguls at the top, and both commercial and independent filmmakers at the bottom — about what China can gain as it flaunts its standing as the most vibrant and opportunity-laden market in the world. So it is that billions are made in the country, but is it sustainable? Or should executives now just look inwards in stirring domestic consumption — as former Tudou CEO, Gary Wang will do next month as he launches a studio to make locally-oriented animation films — or should a long-term strategy be put in place for developing Chinese cinema's standing abroad?

So it is that Wanda Group and Beijing Galloping Horse made their presence very much felt in the U.S. last year with their purchase of the AMC cinema chain and the visual effects house Digital Domain, but all noises of triumphalism were muted last month with *Lost in Thailand*'s dismal box office during its limited U.S. run on 29 AMC screens in February. Admittedly, the film was positioned as a niche release anyway, but it's also the latest in a long litany of record-breaking Chinese blockbusters (such as Zhang Yimou's *Flowers of War* and Jiang Wen's *Let the Bullets Fly*) which failed to make their mark outside China.

This shortfall is due to a lack of an “internationalist” perspective on the part of producers and directors, according to Zhou Tiedong, president of China Film Promotion International, the state-backed



Director James Cameron was in Beijing last year to attend the signing ceremony for his new joint venture, CPG China, which will develop 3D projects in partnership with two firms in Tianjin.

body in charge of marketing Chinese productions abroad. “Why was *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* a success? It's because it's an Oriental update and upgrade of the already established structure of the Western, something familiar but with Chinese elements. It's refreshing, and people would go and watch the film even if it's simply out of curiosity.”

Zhou agrees the Chinese market is at its commercial apex, but most of the country's output — which has hovered around the 600 mark for the past few years — has been “pretty dismal,” with a lack of quality control exerted by producers or consumers. The same goes for how these films are marketed overseas as well: a Hong Kong distributor, who declined to be named, said his team once entirely overhauled the promotional material of a mainland film because of its incompetent quality.

According to Hong Kong director Gordon Chan Ka-seung, the success of *Painted Skin: Resurrection* and *Lost in Thailand* belies the fact that some producers in

the country still need input from abroad about how to produce, distribute and market films, even though the country's film industry has “progressed a lot and its offerings are more varied.”

Still, China's progress as a global film super power is an uncertainty given the country's censorship regime. At present, film regulators at the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television still approve or deny productions and screening licenses on a very vague set of guidelines, with many filmmakers complaining of the arbitrary nature of some of the decisions made. Filmmakers have complained of the absurd situation that allows children to see violent blockbusters while adult viewers are denied the opportunity to watch grittier indie vehicles because censors refuse to green-light them due to a few politically sensitive scenes.

One thing is certain however: China is serious about fulfilling its enormous potential — but how it actually accomplishes this is still a matter of debate. **VH1**



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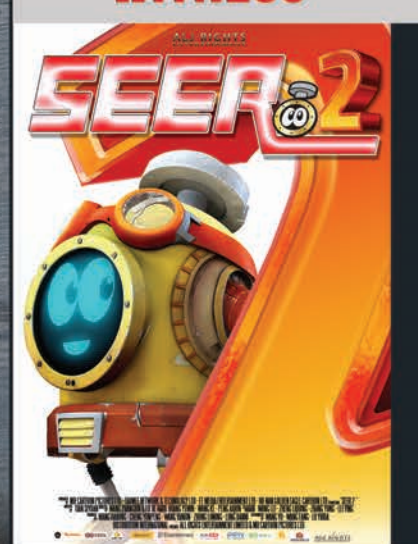
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Hong Kong's Television Broadcasts Limited comes to Filmart with the period drama *Beauty at War*, a sequel to its hit drama series *War and Beauty*; Mediacorp TV Singapore has high hopes for *Project Dream Home*, below.

# Asian TV Sector Thrives at Filmart

The annual film market's TV World banner has become a valuable resource for regional broadcasters looking to tap into the latest trends on the small screen

By Karen Chu

OVER THE YEARS, THE NAME Hong Kong Filmart has become something of a misnomer, with the trade fair now encompassing television and digital entertainment. The industry confab has enjoyed steady growth from its inauguration in 1997 — now in its 17th year it is playing host to 710 exhibitors and is expecting over 6,000 international visitors from over 50 countries and regions for its 2013 edition. But the sector with the most significant expansion belongs to television, with over 250 exhibitors grouped under the TV World banner, which accounts for over a 30 percent increase from last year.

Parallel to the general growth of Filmart itself, the expansion of TV World can be partly attributed to the increased

participation of Chinese companies, according to the Filmart organizer, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council. "We see enormous potential for further TV World growth in this area, as there are around 700 regional stations and a total of over 2,000 stations in China," says Raymond Yip, assistant executive director of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, which organizes TV World with the Hong Kong Televisioners Association. "Buoyed by the advertising revenue, Chinese television stations have a great deal of resources for promotion. A lot of deals were made at Filmart between stations from China and around the world at Filmart. The Chinese television stations also see Filmart as a springboard to reach the rest of the world."

Volume of sales and acquisition of

**“We see enormous potential for further TV World growth in this area, as there are around 700 regional stations and a total of over 2,000 stations in China.”** — **RAYMOND YIP, ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HONG KONG TRADE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL**



television programs in China reached 640 million yuan (\$103 million), or 360 million hours, in 2010, according to the last statistical report released from China's State Administration of Film, Radio and Television.

The international branch of China's Central Television (CCTV), China International TV Corporation, has a prominent presence at the market, while regional stations and production companies such as Henan will also tout their fare at the market.

But the expansion of Filmart's television sector does not stem solely from China. New participants such as Al Jazeera Network from Qatar are making a debut at the market, while Filmart veteran Nippon Television Network Corporation is bringing an increased contingent from its television branch to the fair.

"Our movie team has been attending



Filmart since several years ago,” remarks Eri Watanabe of NTV International Business Development, who is introducing the network’s programs at the market, including the drama series *3-in-1 House Share*, *Carry On! Hara-chan!*, *The Files of Young Kindaichi – Lost in Kowloon* and the animated series *GJ Club*. “We used to recognize Hong Kong Filmart as the market focusing on movie titles only, however, in recent years, we’re aware of the fact that many of our clients, especially acquisition teams of television stations from South-east Asia, attend Filmart,” says Watanabe. The trade fair is unique in that it attracts buyers from the region that the company might not be able to meet at other markets, Watanabe adds. It also provides a platform for the company to collect information about TV trends through the Asian market.

Regular exhibitors are also returning to the trade fair, such as Mediacorp Television Singapore, which closed more than 100 hours of variety titles with various platforms in Hong Kong last year as a result of contacts established at Filmart. Apart from connecting with industry players in Hong Kong, the company, which has attended Filmart five times previously, is looking to meet potential co-production partners, and has arrived with two new reality titles to shop: *Style: Check In* and *Project Dream Home*. “With the potential new free-to-air licenses to be awarded soon, we have high expectations for the market and look forward to expanding our content distribution to many more platforms in Hong Kong,” notes Tang Yun Leung, vice president, content distribution of Mediacorp TV Singapore.

Content exchange in terms of television series is to be expected, but even buyers from movie channels are looking forward to exploring television series from different regions at Filmart. “We are going to look for high quality television series from Europe,” says one local movie channel operator. “It doesn’t matter whether a channel is nominally dedicated to movies or not, the trend for movies channels nowadays is to show television series and look for variety in programming. As long as the production value of the series is high, we’re interested in showing it on our channel.”

The television component of Filmart will also look at the new ways of programming and applications in new media platforms. A seminar titled “TV Programming and the Synergy with New Media” will be held on March 19. To prove that some players are already leading by example in this area, China’s video-sharing giant Youku Tudou is announcing a strategic partnership with Hong Kong’s Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB) to exclusively distribute more than 1,000 hours of TVB content on the same day. TVB will also showcase its lineup of 17 new dramas, including *Beauty At War*, the sequel to the hit period series, *War and Beauty* the pilot drama *Triumph In The Skies II* and the original series *Gilded Chopsticks* and *Awfully Lawful* at a two-day event on March 18 and 19. **THR**

## TV TRENDS FROM AROUND ASIA

From Chinese soap operas heading West to the massive (and mostly untapped) Indonesian television market — five small screen developments you need to know



The celebrity competition show *Running Man*, with Jackie Chan, left, continues to be a ratings smash in South Korea.

### AUSTRALIA

Imported formats have been the big ratings winners on Australian television in recent years with local versions of *The Voice*, *X Factor* and the return of *Big Brother* all drawing big numbers in 2012. But it looks like a homegrown format will be the program to beat in 2013. Even after three seasons on air, the Seven Network’s amateur cooking and dinner party competition, *My Kitchen Rules*, is setting new ratings records, drawing as many as three million viewers four nights a week. Conceived and produced in-house by Seven’s production team and a freshly-inked sale as a format and finished program to Sky in the U.K., *My Kitchen Rules* looks set to emulate the success of Shine Australia’s version of *Mas-terchef* internationally.

### CHINA

While the merger in August 2012 between two of China’s biggest online TV portals, Youku and Tudou, certainly raised eyebrows, TV-watching Chinese bloggers were driven into a frenzy in January when news broke about the rights of one of the country’s most-watched serials being sold to the U.S. Speaking to the Chinese press, director Zheng Xiaolong said *The Legend of Zhen Huan*, a drama about the power struggle between concubines in the imperial court in the Qing

Dynasty, has already been sold to a U.S. distributor, who will re-edit the 80-episode series into a six-installment mini-series for American channels. If the reports of the series slated for slots on HBO turn out to be true, it will be the first time a Chinese soap opera has managed to land on mainstream broadcasters on the other side of the Pacific.

### INDONESIA

The Indonesian economy expanded by 6.2 percent in 2012, galloping past every Western nation, and much of Asia, in speed of growth. With a considerable swath of the country’s huge population of 243 million — nearly 75 percent of that of the United States — now climbing into the middle class, the appetite for screen entertainment is naturally on the rise (at last count, Nielsen estimates that Indonesia now has 50 million TV viewers).

“If you’re in the finance and business information business, you’ve been watching Indonesia for the past several years, asking: ‘How do I get to Indonesia and how soon?’” Andrew Lack, chief executive of Bloomberg Media Group, said recently. Bloomberg put its money where its mouth is last week in announcing that Bloomberg LP will begin broadcasting Bloomberg Television Indonesia this May. A partnership with Jakarta-based Idea Group, a

media holding company backed by Recapital Group, Bloomberg TV Indonesia will be the island nation’s first 24-hour business news channel — bringing realtime broadcast reporting to one of the world’s fastest growing economies.

### JAPAN

The Japanese TV industry is abuzz with the unprecedented \$177 million in government support recently announced to help sell content, including TV programs, formats and anime overseas, for the new fiscal year beginning in April. Nearly \$100 million will be available for localizing content, \$62 million for related promotion and around \$15 million for international co-productions. Part of the efforts by the new government, elected in December, to stimulate the Japanese economy after decades of stagnation, the available funds dwarfs both previous support and total annual overseas sales of TV content. With a domestic market shrinking inevitably in tandem with a shrinking population, the Japanese content industry will be strengthening its focus on overseas markets, particularly the rapidly expanding economies of its Asian neighbors.

### SOUTH KOREA

Despite a number of shows working the threat from North Korea into their plots, South Koreans seem more inclined toward heartwarming family dramas like *You Are the Best* (KBS2), starring K-pop star IU, or melodramas featuring classic, if clichéd, elements like family feuds and star-crossed lovers such as *A Hundred Year Legacy* (MBC), which continue to garner huge ratings locally. But it’s the versatile format for *Running Man* (SBS), where celebrities compete in games of wit and athletics, that continues to do phenomenally well, changing locations overseas to the delight of local fans in Thailand, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and most recently Macao, and featuring famous regional guest stars like Jackie Chan. **THR**





Veteran Hong Kong screen star Eric Tsang, center, plays Ip Man's rival martial arts master.

## Ip Man

CONTINUED FROM 1

by the high-grossing *Ip Man* 2. Producer Raymond Wong has announced the imminent release of a third instalment in 3D. Meanwhile, veteran Herman Yau directed the 2010 *The Legend is Born – Ip Man* with Dennis To portraying the master as a teenager learning his craft in China, effectively a prequel to the other films.

Still, none of the pictures, even those made with the consultation of Ip Man's son Ip Chun like *The Final Fight*, attempt anything like a rigorous biopic. Each reworks the main character into a mythic mold. Here the focus is on the moral authority an aging, Zen-like master exerts over his pupils during a very confused historical moment in British-controlled Hong Kong of the 1950s.

Engaging veteran actor Anthony Wong plays an ironic older Ip Man who arrives in Hong Kong from the mainland as the curtain rises. His pretty wife Wing Sing soon follows him. They've lost their wealth and part of their family in China during the Sino-Japanese war and are looking to make a new, if humble, start. They are at once taken under the wing of an adoring group of working class students who are passionate about learning the Chinese discipline of Wing Chun from a master. Coming from all walks of life, these earnest young folk are involved in

the politics of the day, including union strikes and clashes with the police, and a stand-off with organized crime.

Without really trying, Wong soon gathers a strong school around him. One of his pupils is a policeman (Jordan Chan) who is sorely tempted by bribes. Another is the leader of the restaurant union and offers Ip a scenic terrace where he can hold lessons. A young woman student is a firebrand union leader who urges on a mass of starving workers in a protest march that ends in a fierce battle with police. When she is arrested, the policeman uses the bribe money he has ambivalently accepted to bribe the British and get her out of jail.

Chan's cop is a full-fledged character and the most memorable of his students, even though he ignores the master's cryptic moral advice and eventually throws in his lot with the scarred crime lord Dragon in an unholy association. It allows him to rise to the top as Chief Inspector, but on Dragon's payroll. He is a key participant in the closing free-for-all mentioned in the film's title, which takes place in an illegal boxing ring and in the eerie alleyways of Dragon's walled slum. When a clean-cut young boxer who rose to fame with Wing Chun refuses to throw a fight, Dragon orders him killed in the ring. Improbably, his wife gets wind that he is in danger and Ip Man appears on the scene with

his whole school of fighters in a satisfying action finale. All this takes place during a typhoon that sweeps the studio streets with falling signs and blowing litter.

Wong is such a fine, subtle actor that it comes as a surprise to find him a superb martial arts practitioner as well, as he convincingly demonstrates the superiority of Ip Man's technique over competing schools, like old Ng's White Crane style (actor-producer-director Eric Tsang in a happy cameo.)

One could wish for a little more realism and a little less glossing over of Ip's relationship to the lovely, illiterate young singer Jenny (an able if impossibly saintly Zhu Chouchou) who falls for him. Their platonic relationship, much snubbed by his prudish students, gives way to a sentimental ending that is nevertheless well-handled by the actors. It's she who introduces him to opium when he's doubled-up in pain, but it is made to seem an accidental, one-off indulgence and not the serious long-term addiction it was rumoured to be. What is not covered up is the utter poverty of the times, affecting not just the main characters but a family the Ips know who are forced to sell one of their six children to feed the rest. Here again Wong wiggles out of a potentially schmaltzy moment with his quiet, self-controlled but very human reaction. In a scene that rhymes with Jenny's glass of opium, he

acknowledges his friends' pain and temporarily assuages it by pouring out more booze. Given everyone's dire poverty, there is little more that can be done.

Raymond Chan's deliberately old-fashioned production design paints a quaint old-World city shot on a studio backlot. The colorful streets hung with signs make an apt setting for some of the mass fight scenes between Ip Man's students and various malefactors, whose West Side Story feeling is increased by Chun Hung Mak's overblown score. In a delightful moment, Bruce Lee, the master's most famous student, makes his light-hearted return from Hollywood as a warm-hearted but naïve star in a shining Rolls Royce, which Ip Man politely declines to ride in.

**Hong Kong Film Festival**  
**Production companies** *Emperor Motion Pictures, Pegasus Taihe Entertainment*  
**Cast** *Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Gillian Chung, Jordan Chan*  
**Director** *Herman Yau*  
**Screenwriter** *Erica Lee*  
**Producers** *Checkley Sin, Albert Lee*  
**Director of photography** *Kwong-hung Chan*  
**Production designer** *Raymond Chan*  
**Costumes** *Thomas Chong*  
**Editor** *Wai Chiu Chung*  
**Music** *Chun Hung Mak*  
**Sales Agent** *Emperor Motion Pictures*



# Populaire

Romain Duris and Deborah Francois headline a rom-com with a decidedly retro sensibility *By Jordan Mintzer*

**M**AD MEN MEETS THE ARTIST IN *POPULAIRE*, A SUPERBLY crafted, finely acted but somewhat shallow retro rom-com about a young French secretary who, with the help of her highly persuasive boss, hammers her way to becoming one of the fastest typists on the planet.

This impressive debut feature from writer-director Regis Roinsard is boosted by terrific lead turns from Romain Duris and Deborah Francois, as well as some stunning old-school cinematography from Michel Hazanavicius regular Guillaume Schiffman. Still, there's something formulaic and all too overtly crowd-pleasing about this sepia-toned tale of female empowerment and lost love.

Set in the rain-swept towns of Lower Normandy in 1958, the film makes its throwback status heard loud and clear from the get-go, with opening credits (directed by Alexandre Courtes, *Asylum Blackout*) straight out of a Billy Wilder movie and decors and a color palette that would please the likes of both Alfred Hitchcock and Matthew Weiner.

A quick intro presents small-town gal Rose Pamphyle (Francois, channeling the feistier side of Grace Kelly), who works at her dad's local grocery store but longs for a better life. She thus decides to apply for a secretarial position at a neighboring insurance office run by the sleek, fast-talking Louis Echard (Duris, sharp and sprightly), who's impressed by both her superhuman typing skills and killer looks. Before long, he takes Rose under his wing as his protegee, training her



Duris, left, makes secretary Francois his protege.

for a regional secretary competition and moving her into his country mansion. While the love story is meant to fuel much of the action, it's often overshadowed by the thrill of the training sessions and typing competitions. Cutting between the competing secretaries as they pound out keystrokes and slam back their typewriter carriages, the director and editors Laure Gardette and Sophie Reine endow these sequences with the nail-biting suspense of a finale at Roland Garros, making them the real highlights of the movie.

*Originally reviewed at the Rome Film Festival*

**Production companies** *Les Productions du Tresor, France 3 Cinema, France 2 Cinema, Mars Films, Wild Bunch Panache Productions, La Compagnie Cinematographique, RTBF*

**Cast** *Romain Duris, Deborah Francois, Berenice Bejo, Shaun Benson*

**Director** *Regis Roinsard*

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# Linsanity

Evan Jackson Leong's film adds a fresh perspective to point guard Jeremy Lin's breakout NBA season *By Justin Lowe*

**W**HEN PRO BASKETBALL player Jeremy Lin burst into the national consciousness in a flurry of record-setting games with the New York Knicks last winter, most fans — and even many sports professionals — had little clue who he even was. While a surge of global enthusiasm, quickly dubbed “Linsanity,” pushed him to international celebrity, in reality Lin was struggling for the opportunity to sign a multiyear NBA contract.

Chinese-American filmmaker Evan Jackson Leong already was shooting a documentary about Lin's career well before the stardom stage, which allows him to bring an insider's perspective to one of the NBA's most memorable career starts. With Lin's worldwide following already firmly in place, broadcast play for *Linsanity* is practically a lock, while basketball's already notable popularity throughout much of Asia could assure the delivery of multiple territories for a variety of formats.

The middle son of Taiwanese immigrant parents who settled in Palo Alto, Calif., Lin started

playing basketball from an early age, modeling his moves on Michael Jordan and encouraged by his NBA-fanatic father and tirelessly supportive mom, who observes in an interview that “Jeremy will do anything he can to get what he wants.” Local media began tracking Lin when he played point guard for the Palo Alto Vikings high school team, leading them to a state championship.

Accepting an offer to play in the Dallas Mavericks' summer league, Lin subsequently signed with his hometown Golden State Warriors for the 2010-11 season. Although he'd finally accomplished his lifelong dream of playing in the NBA, he rarely saw game action. When Lin was dropped by the Warriors, the Houston Rockets picked him up, then quickly cut him again. Lin was facing the expiration of his contract when the New York Knicks came calling, putting him into a memorable series of games in February 2012 as a substitute for injured-list point guards.

In his first five career games, Lin scored a record-setting 136 points, including 38 in a single game against Kobe Bryant's L.A. Lakers.



Director Leong had already begun this personal portrait before “Linsanity” swept the globe.

From promotional spots, endorsements and Facebook tributes to the covers of *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*, Lin had the sports world's undivided attention. And as Leong continued to shoot his documentary, the story suddenly blew up to global proportions.

With a mix of personal interviews — including extensive on-camera discussions with Lin, combined with more informal scenes — home-video footage from Lin's childhood and clips from his high school and college

careers, as well as game-play commentary from ESPN and other broadcasters, Leong has assembled a film that's not just a stirring sports drama but also a classic immigrant-family success story, presented in an entirely new context.

*Originally reviewed at The Sundance Film Festival*  
**Production companies** 408 Films, Arowana Films  
**Director** Evan Jackson Leong  
**Sales** CAA

## The Great Passage

Everyman champion Ishii Yuya returns with another, more dramatic look at life in contemporary Japan *By Elizabeth Kerr*

**T**HE 15-YEAR QUEST TO PUBLISH Japan's next great dictionary (!) is misguidedly at the heart of the latest from budding Japanese auteur Ishii Yuya. Following the bizarre, deadpan comedies that put the filmmaker on the international radar, *Sawako Decides* and *Mitsuko Delivers*, Ishii strays into straight drama in *The Great Passage*, with intermittently affecting results. The film could find moderate success at home where its themes surrounding the Japanese penchant for diplomacy over honest communication will connect with audiences; the one-two-three punch of popular leads will only help its chances at the box office. Overseas, Ishii's past minor hits and, again, the cast will be the draw for an art house release and any kind of festival life.

When a publisher's dictionary section editor retires from Genbu Books, up-and-coming corporate overlord Masashi (Odagiri Jo) pilfers the

bookish, awkward Mitsuya (Matsuda Ryuhei) from the sales department and a reference materials star is born. Outrageously shy with a near-crippling inability to relate to anyone, Mitsuya's inelegance seems to get even worse when he meets mysterious chef Kaguya (Miyazaki Aoi) at his rooming house. Naturally he falls for her, but his poor communication skills nearly derail a chance at romance. But between the beginning of the story in 1995, the final printing of the linguistic magnum opus, “The Great Passage” — which, remarkably, evokes a reaction akin to the moon landing — and all the minor drama in between, Mitsuya does succeed at finally connecting with those around him.

To say the thematic and narrative heft of *The Great Passage* is understated is, well, an understatement. Ishii's stock and trade is the unremarkable lives of everyday people, and despite the standard diverse clutch of characters that join forces to finish the dictionary — the retiring editor, a professor with a passion for language, and so on — the personalities that populate the film are so normal they almost fade away. The story starts in pre-Twitter 1995, so there's a film about how we



Miyazaki Aoi plays an introverted chef.

constantly adapt and change the ways we connect to each other lurking beneath the surface, but Ishii never goes there. To top it off, Ishii and cinematographer Fujisawa Junichi opt for unfussy images and compositions that would work just as well on television as on the big screen.

**Hong Kong International Film Festival**  
**Producer** Goka Kimitaka, Iwanami Yasuyuki, Tsuchii Tomoo  
**Director** Ishii Yuya  
**Cast** Matsuda Ryuhei, Miyazaki Aoi, Odagiri Jo, Kuroki Haru, Ikerwaki Chizuru



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Dujardin and Cecile de France have a smoldering affair set against the world of international finance.

# Mobius

The Oscar-winning star of *The Artist* goes undercover in this English, French and Russian-language espionage thriller

By Eric Rochant

**R**ETURNING TO THE espionage theme of his 1994 feature *The Patriots*, Eric Rochant's big-budget thriller *Mobius* takes place in the present-day post-financial crisis world. But its ambience has a distinctly flashy, Eurotrashy '90s tang that makes it not difficult to peg as a production from Luc Besson's EuropaCorp banner. The film is too muddy in its over-complicated plotting and too slack in its pacing to maximize suspense. However, its glossy look and the star pairing of Oscar-winner Jean Dujardin with Cecile de France should give it a commercial head start at home and a smattering of sales abroad.

There's something mildly dispiriting about seeing two actresses associated with the exquisitely observed ultra-realism of Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne — de France from *The Kid With a Bike*, and Emilie Dequenne from *Rosetta* — meeting in a high-end sauna to clinch a spying agreement concerning a sleazy Russian kingpin.

Perhaps even odder for international audiences familiar with him only from *The Artist* will be watching Dujardin put his swarthy good looks and mellow charisma behind a role that overstates the character's sexual prowess to an almost ludicrous degree.

Playing Gregory Lioubov, an undercover Russian intelligence officer stationed in Monaco, he shoots a few smoldering glances at brilliant international banking ace Alice Redmond (de France),

and they swap some flirtatious banter. Before long, they're in the sack and he's steering her — shuddering, gasping, almost weeping — through a couple of rapturous orgasms while lying on his back doing nothing but staring up at her with glistening eyes. "You have solid arms," she says, wrapped in them during their post-coital afterglow. "They feel like home." Seriously, this is a bit much.

*Mobius* starts off as a finance thriller in the mold of *Arbitrage* or *Margin Call*, with solemn requiem music conveying the moral bankruptcy in the upper echelons of the money market. It then shifts somewhat half-heartedly into spy mode, with a few nasty scrapes and narrow escapes but not enough suspenseful set-pieces to build much tension or excitement. In the age of the *Bourne* franchise, this just doesn't cut it.

Aside from some current references to global finance, this all feels like something that might have been cooked up 20 years ago.

Originally reviewed at the Berlin International Film Festival  
Production companies Recifilms, Axel Films, Les Productions du Tresor, EuropaCorp, JD Prod, France 3 Cinema, Samsa Film, Artemis Productions

Cast Jean Dujardin, Cecile de France, Tim Roth, Emilie Dequenne, Aleksei Borgunov  
Director-screenwriter Eric Rochant

# Broken

Tim Roth, Cillian Murphy and newcomer Eloise Laurence star in this debut feature from British stage director Rufus Norris By David Rooney

**W**HILE HE'S SOMEWHAT HAMPERED BY A thematically diffuse screenplay that has too many distractions crowding its protagonist, British theater director Rufus Norris makes a generally accomplished move into film with *Broken*. The visually pleasing drama is graced by a lovely score from Britpop eminence Damon Albarn's Electric Wave Bureau outfit and by fine performances, notably from a soulful Tim Roth and appealing young newcomer Eloise Laurence.

Given how incisively screenwriter Mark O'Rowe adapted Jonathan Trigell's book for the trenchant 2007 drama *Boy A*, it's disappointing that he has not managed to do the same for Daniel Clay's novel. The fault may also lie with a novice director unwilling to make hard choices in the editing room. But there are simply too many characters jostling for attention and too many competing plot strands in a not-quite-seamless marriage of hard-edged social realism with a lyrical novelistic overlay. That said, the film is rich in poignant moments and negotiates its frequent shifts from violence to gentleness to sorrow with sensitivity. Best known for his production of the English-language stage adaptation of *Festen*, Norris definitely shows talent in the new medium.

The central figure of 11-year-old Skunk (Laurence) is a modern-day version of Scout Finch from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but the film seems equally influenced by the treasured 1980s work of late British director Alan Clarke. A type 1 diabetic, tomboyish Skunk lives in a suburban cul-de-sac with her father Archie (Roth), a sad, sweet-natured attorney whose wife abandoned them; her wannabe-cool brother Jed (Bill Milner); and the family au pair, Kasia (Zana Marjanovic). Friendly and direct, Skunk has a special connection with their neighbors' slow-witted twentysomething son, Rick (Robert Emms).

In the first of several time-shuffling scenes, Skunk witnesses Rick being savagely beaten by another neighbor, Mr. Oswald (Rory Kinnear), a hotheaded widower raising three thuggish skanks. We subsequently learn that one of his daughters, Susan (Rosalie Kosky-Hensman), was caught with a condom and impulsively suggested that Rick had raped her. While the charges are quickly dropped when it emerges the girl was lying, Rick's fragile stability has snapped, causing him to retreat into isolation. A later episode with his caring parents (Denis Lawson, Clare Burt) causes him to be institutionalized for treatment.

Violence erupts again when promiscuous Susan really does become pregnant and once more points the finger at a guiltless target. But the succession of tragedies this sets in motion becomes too much for the film to sustain.

Overburdened as it is by narrative clutter and climactic melodrama, *Broken* is always emotionally engaging, never more so than when Laurence is at the center of a scene. She has a sweet, natural screen presence, quirky without being cute. The entire ensemble is solid, with the terrific Kinnear making an especially vivid impression as the neighbor from hell.

Originally reviewed at the Cannes International Film Festival  
Production company Cuba Pictures, BBC Films, Bill Kenwright Films  
Cast Tim Roth, Cillian Murphy, Eloise Laurence, Zana Marjanovic  
Director Rufus Norris



Laurence and Roth play daughter and father navigating a difficult suburban environment.



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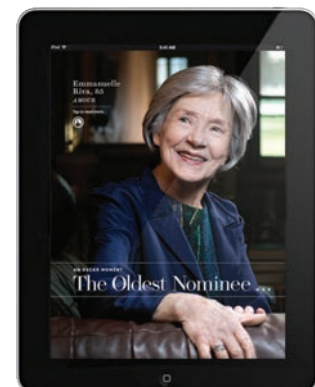
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## HONG KONG MEMORIES

1981

Chan performs one of his signature moves during a Kung Fu demonstration at the Trocadero Plaza in Paris.



31 years after visiting Paris following the success of *The Young Master*, Jackie Chan's first big hit receives a special screening at the HKIFF

**M**UCH HAS CHANGED SINCE 26-year-old Jackie Chan arrived in Paris in 1981 to represent Hong Kong with a martial arts display in Trucadero Plaza. Coming fresh from the remarkable success of *The Young Master* — his first film for Golden Harvest, which broke local box office records long held by Bruce Lee — Chan was the hometown hero, his star very much ascendant.

Today, while no less of a box office draw, the 58-year-old actor fancies himself a rather different sort of statesman. Instead of posing playfully on tanks in Paris (as above), today Chan is more often caught posturing his allegiance to the communist party power set in Beijing. Over the past year alone, Chan has told mainland Chinese press that he

believes the United States is “the most corrupt country in the world,” that Hong Kong should cut back on its political freedoms (by eliminating rights of public protest), and that the disputed islands at the heart of the ongoing political crisis between China and Japan “definitely belong to China!”

In return for his fealty, in January Chan was named a token delegate to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a national-level political advisory board (which wields no real power) — but he's also lost what little public good will he had left back home.

Nevertheless, Chan's *Young Master* gets a rightful nod to its indelible place in Hong Kong film history at HKIFF this year, with a feature screening in The Cinematic Matrix of Golden Harvest program. **THR**



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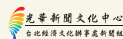
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